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INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0428
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0351
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0408
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1951
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0746
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0040
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0473
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: A BEATEN SENATE PRESIDENT

REF: 2008 NOUAKCHOTT 673

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Charge visited a dejected President of the Senate Ba M'Bare on January 14. During Charge's previous meeting in November (REFTEL), M'Bare opposed the regime despite extreme pressure from the new Central Bank Governor who had cut his check signing privileges and a commission of inquiry set up to investigate him for malfeasance. He now appears broken with no energy left to fight. He told Charge the check issue "has been resolved" and that the special commission was history but was wary of talking politics. "So, it looks like we'll have new elections," was all he had to say about the National Dialogue on Democracy adding that the Senate had blessed the final report. M'Bare was obviously detached from the Dialogue -- seemingly unaware that the final declaration had been changed at the eleventh hour to cite a majority desire for constitutional revision. (M'Bare thought the declaration still called for no change to the constitution as had been cited in the first draft). Asked how he saw the current political scene, M'Bare said, "I don't understand anything that's going on anymore."

¶2. (C) Turning to less political issues, Charge asked for clarification on whether there would be Senate elections in the spring or not. Under the Mauritanian constitution, one-third of the Senate is supposed to be elected every two years through indirect elections held by corresponding city councils throughout the country (there are also three seats representing Mauritians abroad). M'Bare responded that it remained unclear whether those elections would take place in May. He noted that, before the 2005 coup, the system had worked normally with the Senate divided into groups A, B and ¶C. The 2005 coup had abolished the Senate which was reconstituted in 2007 with a simultaneous election of all seats. M'Bare said there were two schools of thought on what to do: (a) establish new groups by lottery and go forward with elections (thereby cutting the mandate of most senators by 2 to 4 years), or (b) respect the six-year mandate and dispense with senate elections every two years. M'Bare said he thought there would be no elections since nobody in the senate wanted to put their well-paid positions at risk earlier than necessary. M'Bare clearly preferred the second option as well since, "If there are no new senate elections then there is no requirement for new senate leadership positions."

13. (C) Comment: In November, M'Bare said he was in close collaboration with President of the National Assembly Messaoud Ould Boulkheir. Boulkheir denied any coordination and, like most of the FNDD leadership, questioned the depth of M'Bare's anti-coup posture. Their skepticism seems well justified. While judging whether the Senate is "for" or "against" the military remains a complicated task since 20 of the 56 senators have set themselves up as a "third way" that shifts with the political winds, the President of the Senate looks like he will roll over on anything the General tries to push through. The only spark M'Bare showed on the 14th was when Charge suggested it was assumed the General would eventually try to get his strongest supporter and Vice President of the Senate Mohamed ElHacen Ould ElHaj into his seat -- "They (the Senate) will NEVER accept him!" M'Bare spat out. End Comment
HANKINS